

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Relationship of unemployment with social unrest and psychological distress: An empirical study for juveniles

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**This study was initiated to measure the effect of unemployment on youths of the society. From the literature, two important factors, social unrest (SU) and psychological distress (PD) were found as a result of unemployment. Both factors were measured by developing a questionnaire of SU and PD from the literature. The population comprised juveniles from higher education institutes of Peshawar. Data were collected from 2 public and 2 private higher education institutes of Peshawar, Pakistan. Respondents had either completed their studies or were about to complete their studies. Moreover, they were divided into two major groups of employed and unemployed. 200 questionnaires were distributed by one person, of which 177 were returned and used in the study. SPSS was used for data analysis. The status of employment was measured through a dichotomous scale, while SU and PD were measured through interval scale. The responses were measured by using independent sample t test. It was observed that unemployed juveniles face greater unrest and distress as compared to employed persons.**

**Key words:** Juveniles, unemployment, social unrest, psychological distress.

## INTRODUCTION

Unemployment rate is increasing on a fast track; since 2007, 30 to 35 million jobs have been lost. International Labor Organization (ILO) has forecast that global unemployment will hit 213 million this year (2010), a rate of 6.5%. The ILO report said, "In the 35 countries for which data exist, nearly 40% of jobseekers have been without work for more than one year and therefore run significant risks of demoralization, loss of self-esteem and mental health problems. More importantly, young people are disproportionately hit by unemployment" (2010). The United Nations work agency said that social unrest in many countries (more than 25 countries) is observed because of unemployment, even in the emerging markets. This bad scenario has given serious need to examine the effect of unemployment on youth, the relationship between unemployment and social unrest, and the relationship between unemployment and psychological distress, and finally to analyze which variable is highly

affected by unemployment. In the present paper, we examined how unemployment affects our youth, the intensity of unemployment on social unrest and how unemployment affects youth's psychology. The data used in this study were collected from Peshawar, Pakistan and were considered to truly represent the general study of unemployment effects among juveniles. Table 1 shows the statistics of unemployment rate in Pakistan during the last eight years.

From Table 1, it is seen that unemployment has drastically increased from 7.4 to 14% in the year 2009 to 2010. The difference of 89% change requires immediate action to avoid the evils of unemployment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Youth

In different territories, the age range of youth is different depending upon the region, social stratification and life expectancy in a country. According to UNICEF, age group of 15 to 24 years falls into youth category. As far

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**Table 1.** Statistics of unemployment rate in Pakistan during the last eight years.

Year	Unemployment rate (%)	Rank	Percent change
2003	7.80	119	
2004	7.70	122	-1.28
2005	8.30	75	7.79
2006	6.60	65	-20.48
2007	6.50	72	-1.52
2008	5.60	71	-13.85
2009	7.40	92	32.14
2010	14.00	142	89.19

Source: CIA World Fact Book.

as the US is concerned, the age group of 0 to 17 years is regarded as child or minor group, and 18 years and above falls into youth adult group. In Brazil, the age of 10 is considered eligible to enter into the labor market. Out of the total world's population of 6 billion, 2.8 billion are under the age of 25 (Malik, 2004). In all previous researches, the age limit for youth is focused on 15 to 24 years but in present research, the youth budgets are considered to fall within the range of 22 to 28 years. The reason behind this age stratification is that pupils graduate at the age of 20 years and start searching for job opportunities. About 104 million Pakistani are below the age of 30 years. Keeping age 28 as an upper limit is because, in Pakistan, the age limit for central superior (CSS) examination is till 28 years, so, after 28 years, a humongous job opportunity closes.

## Unemployment

"Unemployment" is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as people who do not have a job, having actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are currently available for work. Also, people who were temporarily laid off and are waiting to be called back to that job are counted as unemployed. If high national unemployment continues, it can deepen a recession or even cause a depression. That is because less consumer spending from unemployed workers reduces business revenue, which forces them to cut more payrolls to reduce their costs.

It is very crucial to create employment opportunities at the native places of incumbents. Otherwise, the results of unemployment were resourcelessness, poverty and migrations. Sophisticated information about the rate of employment and improved legislation may reduce the unemployed migrants (Sethi et al., 2010). According to LearnVest (Thaoker, 2011), "unemployment in the U.S. currently stands at an eye-popping 9.4%, though the annual average unemployment in 2010 was 9.6%. This means that nearly 1 out of 10 Americans who wants to

work is unable to find a job. The situation is particularly rough on the "99ers" Americans who have been out of work for over 99 weeks and have therefore lost unemployment benefits that have expired. Recently, the 99ers have been in the news as the government struggles to define its role in helping the long-term unemployed" (2010).

To put today's woes into perspective, some historical contexts have been shown in Figure 1. For the past 50 years, the average rate of unemployment was 5.7%. According to standard economics, 5% is recognized as the "natural rate" of unemployment. US recorded a high rate of 10.8% (hit in November, 1982) and a low rate of 2.5% over that same time period (hit in May, 1953). As a more recent comparison, US hit a high recession of 10.1% in October 2009, as compared to a low recession of 3.9% in late 2001. 14% unemployment rate in Pakistan has been observed by the World's Fact book.

## Youth unemployment

Unemployment is a single factor that affects young people, their families and communities (White and Wyn, 2004). Today, youth unemployment has become a serious issue all over the world; approximately half of the unemployed group is of youth (Ebata, 2005). According to UN agency forecasts, about 22 million new jobs are needed - 14 million in rich countries and 8 million in developing countries. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) concluded that youth unemployment was an impeding factor for developing economies. They urged that the situation had become more pathetic for hunting jobs not only for experienced and educated youth but skilled and uneducated youth. They suggested juveniles to be self employed through entrepreneurial process rather than to serve others.

## Social unrest

Social unrest can be defined as a political situation in



**Figure 1.** Unemployment trend in US. Green areas represent recessions. Source: <http://blog.seattlepi.com>.

which people protest or behave violently. Social unrest starts when citizens are not satisfied with government rules, regulations and policies. They start indulging in anti-social welfare deeds just to satisfy their personal or group needs, violate norms, beliefs and values as much as they can. Social unrest can be caused by many unexpected things mainly economical recession, unemployment, crushing of personnel self esteem, financial crises and psychological and physical illness, unavailability of a sound livelihood, etc. the following map indicates the state of social unrest in 2010.

According to economist intelligence unit, Argentina is in the high category as shown in Figure 2. There has been quite a bit of positive news on the stability of this country with lots of alternative investors, like Doug Casey, promoting real estate and agricultural investments. Mexico, however, is a given, and should probably be ranked in the very high category. This country is a disaster, as evidenced by the thousands of deaths on the northern border related to narcotics trafficking, gangs, and mafia. Coupled with the fact that a population has no jobs, and is now losing revenue from family members in the US, this can have a serious breakdown in social order. It would be no surprise if these local wars make their way across the border into Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

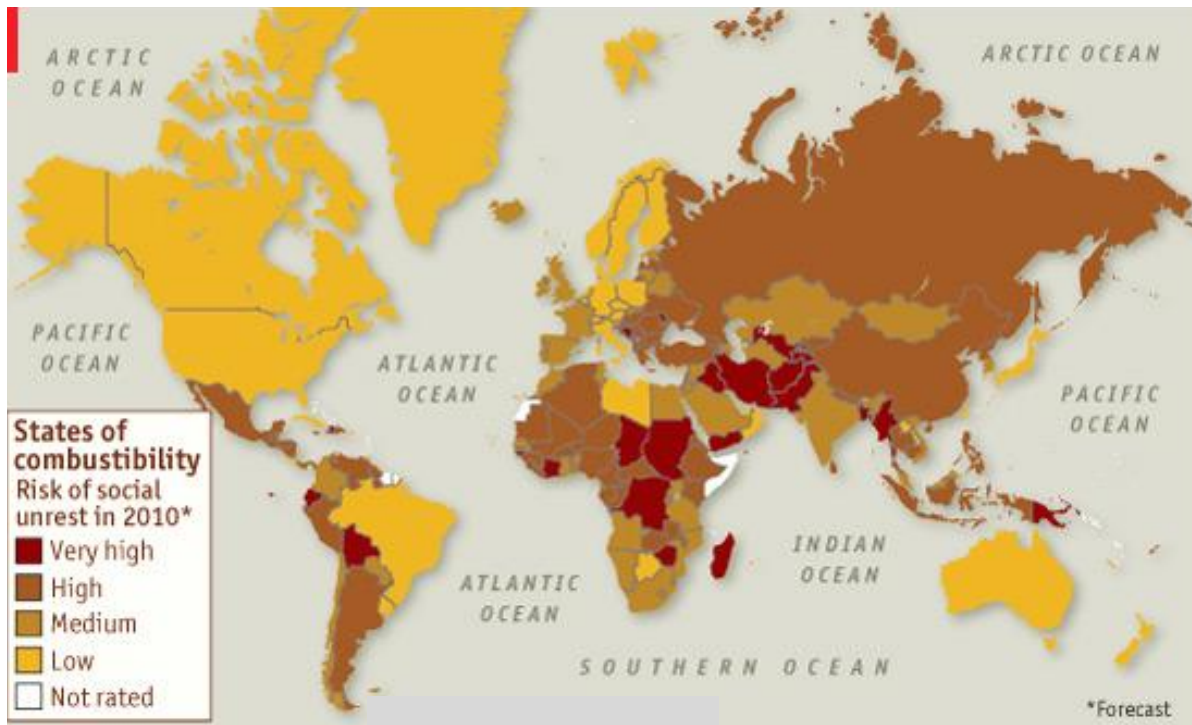
According to economists, the very high rating for the Middle East is dead on. If World War III is going to break out, this is where it is going to start. With religious wars spanning millennia, and resources underground being

drastically reduced through increased consumption around the world, it is no wonder that this part of the globe is what one could deem a current SHTF scenario, and it is only going to get worse.

It is also interesting that the economists rated China as having a “high” risk, with all the positive news about the new capitalist learnings and increased freedoms for their people. Here at SHTF Plan, they do not doubt this rating one bit, considering the fact that all the hooplah about China being “decoupled” from the US economy and being the engine that is driving the world, is just hooplah. Any economic problems in the USA are going to have a direct and immediate impact on China. End of story. That being said, if the mainstream is so incompetent as to see this relationship, it is assumed that their competency can not be trusted about understanding capitalism and how it functions in a politically communist system.

For the USA, for the most part, things seem stable now. Though many have lost their jobs, the poverty levels have not increased significantly, at least not significantly enough to drive millions of people into the streets across major cities in the entire country. However, poverty, as opined by *The Economist*, is only part of the combustibility equation.

Most countries are suffering from social unrest situation because of economic recession. Poverty rates will continue to rise, with 200 million people at risk of joining the ranks of those living on less than \$2 a day. But poverty alone does not spark unrest – exaggerated income



**Figure 2.** State of combustibility in 2010. Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk>.

income inequalities, poor governance, lack of social provision and ethnic tensions are all elements of the brew that foments unrest. Huge differences in status and income level is a problem for human beings because of social stratification causing misery effect on society (Mirowsky and Rose, 2003).

### Unemployment and social unrest

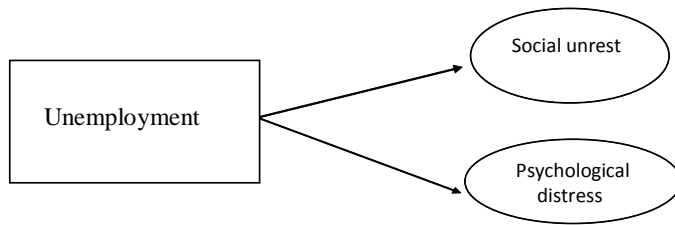
According to UN agency forecast, The International Labor Organization (ILO) has warned of flourishing social unrest because it feared that global employment will not now recover till 2015.

According to Lambo (1965), "Unemployed African school-leavers of today are most vulnerable, and they in turn function as "vectors" for this social malady. Psychological dependence on drugs is more marked in this younger age group. As such, abuse of drugs in African adolescents is not uncommonly found in combinations of amphetamines, barbiturates and cannabis". Due to the high level of unemployment, people are becoming hopeless (Adamson, 1998; Miles et al., 1998). This worse condition shocked the young people as "no hopes", so the converted youth budges into underclass, and laid the foundation of youth criminality (Inniss and Feagin, 1989; Sechissel, 2002). This picture focuses on a permanent unemployment and under employment, draining of capital, and technological advancements all are leading

towards youth and social distraction (White et al., 2002). Youths feel that they are becoming useless to the society (White and Cunnen, 2002). September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on US has pointed out that the youth is directly indulged in violent discordant, worldwide uncertainty and terrorism (Bannon, 2004). This is so because when this culminating discretion of the youth budges with full energy and high aim, and steps in the labor market, and is welcomed with no vacancy, their enthusiasm drops, thus giving birth to psychological issues, and ultimately social unrest flourishes at an alarming rate. Youths work hard to secure a good job but if it does not happen so, it gives rise to a number of social problems, especially crime. Technological advancement, flying of capital from inner cities to commercial cities has raised the competition resulting in decrease in job opportunities in western countries (White and Wyn, 2004). Crowd of frustrated unemployed persons generate social unrest in the shape of violence as violence institutions find youth cheaper and in high supply (Urdal, 2006). Unemployment also leads an individual to break social system, which makes him a pariah of society, resulting in decline in life satisfaction (Sonja and John, 2008).

### Psychological distress

The end result of factors such as psychogenic pain, internal conflicts, and external stress, that prevents a



**Figure 3.** Conceptual model of unemployment.

person from self-actualization and from connecting with significant others. There are different types of psychological disorders including anxiety disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, mood disorders, paraphilias, personality disorders, schizoaffective disorders, schizophrenic disorders, sleep disorders, chronic pains and illnesses.

### Youth unemployment and psychological distress

We can say that social unrest occurs due to psychological effects of unemployment on youths. Entering into unemployment, results in reduction of self esteem, which is considered to be an important trait of stable personality (Brickman et al., 1978; Burman, 1978). Unemployment draws negative impact on mental health (Johada, 1982). Johada also explains 5 physiological impacts of the reduction of the on individual such as, he stops connecting with those outside his family, he stops wishing to be a part of collective purpose, being engaged in meaningful activities and having social status. Unemployment results in lower morale and high anxiety. Unemployment is eating our youths' capabilities, enthusiasm and love for themselves (Shamir, 1986). Two years study of Warr and Jackson (1987) found that men aged between 20 and 29 years in Britain are suffering from more financial strain and psychological descent. In Australia, Rowley and Feather (1987) opines that unemployment affects more middle aged male (30 to 49 years) than young aged unemployed males (15 to 24 years). Unemployment aggravates negative psychological effects that lead towards high morality, suicide risk and crime ratio (Jensen and Smith, 1990). Comparison of unemployed women and men reveals that men react more negatively when they are unemployed (Lahelmo, 1992). Moreover, unemployed individuals suffer greater physical illness and health complaints (Schwarzer et al., 1994; Turner, 1995). They are most probably engaged in high-risk health behaviors such as using alcohol (Catalano et al., 1993; Viinama"ki et al., 1993; Rasky et al., 1996; Claussen, 1999). Research conducted by Warr et al. (1998) showed that middle aged unemployed are more distressed than young unemployed budges. Grossi

et al. (1998) examined psychological variations as a result of long-term unemployed persons; they found out high levels of depression, irritability, and anxiety and low mastery. Creed and Watson (2003) concluded that males and females are equally distressed in periods of unemployment. Clark and Oswald (1994) and Clark (1998) indicated that psychological effects are lower when both partners are unemployed. If there is high unemployment rate in a society, unemployment does not yield negative impact. Same is the case when individual partner is unemployed and when more individuals in a family are unemployed (Clark et al., 1999). Comparing samples of employed and unemployed has shown high level of psychological distress in unemployed sample (Water and Moore, 2002).

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prior literature has shown a relationship between unemployment and social unrest with the psychology of people. Youth unemployment is positively related to social unrest in the society. Unemployment negatively impacts on youth psyche. According to the factor discussed earlier, the developed conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 3.

### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: Youth unemployment develops positive effect on social unrest, UN +ve SU

H<sub>2</sub>: Youth unemployment generates negative impact on human psyche, UN –ve HP

### METHODOLOGY

In this paper, data were collected through conducting surveys. 200 questionnaires were distributed among freshly graduated management sciences students of two private (Iqra and Cecos) and two public (IM Sciences and IM Studies) sector universities of Peshawar, keeping all universities of Peshawar as its population. Personal and demographic information was collected through 5 open ended questions.

Using Likert scale, there were 19 questions in sequence, 10 to analyze their views about linkage between unemployment and social unrest (this section of survey was designed personally, keeping in view the present scenario of the society), and 9 questions regarding unemployment and its effect on human psyche. Questions were adapted from the original scale of psychological distress by Caplan et al. (1980). By adapting the convenience sampling technique, 200 questionnaires were floated. Out of 200 surveys, 177 students gave their feedback. SPSS was used for data analysis. Status of employment was measured through a dichotomous scale while social unrest and psychological distress were measured through interval scale. The responses were collected from two distinct groups; employed and unemployed, so the statistics used for measurement was independent sample t-test which was consistent with the previous studies like Svensson and Pauwels (2008) and Wu (2010).

**Table 2.** Reliability statistics.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
Psychological distress (PD)	0.759	9
Social unrest (SU)	0.687	10

Source: Field data.

**Table 3.** Group statistics.

Employment status		N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
SU	Unemployed	92	3.2457	0.49267	0.05136
	Employed	85	2.3788	0.49644	0.05385
PD	Unemployed	92	2.7669	0.70697	0.07371
	Employed	85	2.1974	0.50523	0.05480

Source: Field data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First of all, reliability of the observed variables has been tested by applying the test of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of the variables. It is rule of thumb that the items of a variable having the value of 0.7 highly correlate with each other (Table 2). In this study, the calculated value for first dependent variable 0.759 shows the high consistency among the items of PD. The value of Cronbach's alpha for SU is 0.687 which is slightly lower than 0.7 but for newly developed constructs and for social nature of variables, the value of 0.5 is also acceptable. So we have proceeded for further statistical tests.

Independent sample t-test has been applied to the collected data. The assumption of independent sample t test is that one of the observed variables should be dichotomous grouping variable which divides the variable into two groups. In the study, the group has been subdivided categorically by assigning the codes; 1 for employed persons and 2 for unemployed persons. The test has been applied at a confidence level of 95%.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of both groups of employed and unemployed persons. This table shows the sample size, mean, standard deviation and standard error of mean. The higher mean value for SU and PD for unemployed persons implies that unemployed persons have greater anxiety as compared to employed persons. Table 4 shows the results of independent sample t tests. The statistics has produced two sets of results for both employed and unemployed groups. The first test assumes that the variances of both groups are equal while the second test assumes that variances are not equal. The t-test for equality of means shows the t statistic, degree of freedom, level of significance, mean

difference and standard error of difference. The significance (2 tailed) value of both variables SU and PD is less than 0.05 for equal and unequal variances. So, it can be said on the basis of calculated results that unemployment causes social unrest as well as psychological unrest among juveniles.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to measure the impact of unemployment on juveniles. It was to establish whether or not unemployment causes social unrest and psychological distress among youth. From the collected data, it has been observed that as the unemployment rate increases, it causes social unrest as well as psychological distress among juveniles. Two hypotheses were developed to measure the relationship of unemployment with social unrest and psychological distress. It was assumed that unemployment develops positive effect on social unrest and generates negative impact on human psyche. Both hypotheses proved to be true. So, it can be safely said that unemployment causes social unrest as well as psychological distress. From Table 4, it was also observed from the Leven's test for equality of variances that the impact of unemployment on psychological distress is more severe as compared to social unrest. This study's results are consistent with those of previous studies like Jin et al. (1995) which showed a positive relationship between unemployment and physical and psychological illness indicating mortality, heart disease, mental health, heavy drinking, and the use of mental health services. From Table 3, by observing the means of employed and unemployed juveniles, it was observed that unemployed persons tend to show higher degree of

**Table 4.** Independent samples test.

Variable		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	SE diff.	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
SU	Equal variances assumed	1.698	0.194	11.652	175	0.000	0.86683	0.07439	0.72000	1.01365
	Equal variances not assumed			11.648	173.679	0.000	0.86683	0.07442	0.71995	1.01371
PD	Equal variances assumed	10.622	0.001	6.121	175	0.000	0.56952	0.09304	0.38590	0.75314
	Equal variances not assumed			6.201	164.843	0.000	0.56952	0.09185	0.38818	0.75087

Source: Field data.

disagreement as compared to employed persons.

**LIMITATIONS**

The scale of psychological distress has slight reliability from the accepted standards. In future, the scale can be enhanced by adding some new items. This study comprises samples only from the Peshawar region and is limited only to educational institutes. To increase the scope of this study, a larger sample with different professional organizations can be taken in future.

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